

**Testimony for Public Hearing
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
March 2, 2021**

**Annie McGovern
Student at Wesleyan University
Intern at NARAL Pro-Choice CT
233 Williams Street
Middletown, CT 06457**

H.B. 6374 An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Annie McGovern and I am a junior at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. I testify today in strong support of H.B. 6374 and believe a bill of this nature is long overdue. I, like many other young adults, have unfortunately experienced my share of non-consensual interactions. While sexual misconduct is a difficult topic to discuss, it is one that needs to be addressed.

Sexual violence is ubiquitous in the United States and often defined as an epidemic. Rates of sexual violence have only been rising during the times of COVID given increased feelings of frustration, anger, stress, etc. and increased time spent sharing space with partners. On college campuses, non-consensual interactions occur at an even higher rate. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center presents some staggering statistics, notably that “Most female victims of completed rape (79.6%) experienced their first rape before the age of 25; 42.2% experienced their first completed rape before the age of 18 years” and that “The 2019 [Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct](#) prepared for the Association of American Universities, updating a 2015 study of the same name, found sexual assault and misconduct at 33 of the nation’s major universities was *almost one in four undergraduate women*” (<https://www.nsvrc.org/statistics>). These statistics only worsen when specifically considering the experiences of queer, disabled, BIPOC individuals.

Mandating that Connecticut’s higher education institutions conduct a campus climate survey every two years will ensure that these schools are receiving the most up to date information on their students’ health and safety, will speed along the implementation of preventative measures, and will provide an outlet for students seeking help or emotional catharsis. My high school conducted such a survey every year - if they can do it, so can the established and accomplished institutions of CT. Any costs that accompany this bill are a minor imposition when compared to the increase in general well-being that it will foster in students. The costs we *should* consider are the emotional and economic costs beared by survivors for the rest of their life.

My high school also instituted a rule similar to the Amnesty policy that prevented students from being penalized for using drugs/alcohol when reporting an instance of sexual misconduct. Such a rule protects survivors and removes one of the numerous barriers to receiving critical help.

Impacts of sexual violence could be greatly mitigated by the passing of H.B. 6374. I urge you to listen to the many students who strongly support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Annie McGovern